

Remarks by

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“U.S. Foreign Policy and U.S. – AZ Relations Lecture” Azerbaijan

Diplomatic Academy University (ADA)

Good afternoon and I am very glad to have the opportunity to talk with students and faculty here at ADA University, an institution which has become a leading international center of learning. I especially want to thank Ambassador Pashayev, ADA's rector, and Vice Rector Ismailzade for inviting me to come today.

Looking around the room today, I know that I am looking at the new generation of Azerbaijani and other country diplomats. For me, as someone who has been engaged in diplomacy on every inhabited continent and who chose international relations as a field of study, I have to confess to a certain measure of emotion – I keep recalling my time as a student at Georgetown and going to lectures and seminars with visiting ambassadors. I suppose it is now my turn to face the sorts of tough questions we gave them. Turnabout, as we say in the U.S., is fair play.

Diplomacy is an art and a skill focused on bringing people together through negotiation, cooperation, and mutual respect. What I find especially exciting about

the profession is that no matter how long one is at it, one keeps learning, things are seldom cut and dried.

Against that background, what I would propose this afternoon is to have a discussion on U.S./Azerbaijan relations. I would like first to share a few thoughts on how I see the partnership between the United States and Azerbaijan and then I would like to hear from you, to get your thoughts on how we can continue moving our relationship forward.

Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and the United States go back 24 years. In fact, we are days away from the anniversary of the Azerbaijani parliament's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on October 18, 1991. Just two months later, the United States formally recognized the independence of the twelve post-Soviet states, including Azerbaijan. In the spring of 1992, we opened diplomatic missions in each other's capitals.

But the basis for our diplomatic relations reaches back further, to the beginning of the 20th century. In 1919 during the Paris Peace Conference, the U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson, met with a delegation from the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. In Wilson's recollections, that delegation consisted of men "who talked the same language that I did in respect of ideas, in respect of conceptions of liberty,

in respect of conceptions of right and justice.” Indeed, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was the first Muslim-majority secular democracy in the world, where men AND women had the right to vote; in fact, universal suffrage had not even been accepted in the United States at that time.

It is these shared values of freedom, equality, and democracy that are a key aspect of our relations today. Azerbaijan has been and remains an important partner for the United States. It is located in what some could call a “difficult neighborhood,” but that neighborhood is the crossroads of Eurasia. I prefer to look at its location as an opportunity: an opportunity for cooperation along three critical and equally important fronts of security, of energy and economic cooperation, and of democracy and human rights.

The United States has long recognized Azerbaijan as a stalwart partner advancing international security. Americans remember that following the attacks of September 11, 2001, President Heydar Aliyev was among the first to extend a hand of support and to offer his country’s close cooperation in our efforts to combat terrorism. That important and deeply valued cooperation in fighting terrorism and violent extremism continues. Moreover, U.S. and Azerbaijani troops have served together in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. Thousands of flights have crossed Azerbaijan’s airspace en route to Afghanistan, and thousands of containers have departed Baku in support of the International Security Assistance Force. While we

have done a lot, there is still more that can be done in areas of security cooperation, such as strengthening border security, non-proliferation, and countering human trafficking, that will yield great benefits.

The United States and Azerbaijan have cooperated for more than twenty years on energy security. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the progress on the Southern Corridor for gas represent powerful symbols of Azerbaijan's commitment to global energy security – a key element of international efforts to diversify energy routes and sources for European countries. We also support Azerbaijan in its efforts to diversify its economy further and to develop agriculture, information technologies, tourism, and other sectors, and to help Azerbaijan develop its transportation and other infrastructure as part of the Greater Silk Road project.

Just as we continue our security and economic cooperation, however, we must also work with Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis on advancing democratic institutions and processes, strengthening rule of law, and upholding basic human rights because these three fronts are all interconnected. I would argue that in any country if the people feel their government is accountable to them and that they can say or think what they want, there will be stability and economic growth. As President Obama noted in his speech last month to the UN General Assembly, countries that are not fully democratic have again and again shown themselves to be unstable. I would argue the painful crisis in Libya today, for example, stems largely from the elimination or twisting of institutions under the 42 years of misrule by Muammar

Qadhafi. And countries where there is rule of law can attract and keep business investment and entrepreneurs and thereby become more prosperous and stable.

Thus, the values that Azerbaijan and the United States share factor directly into the stability and economic prosperity of the country. And the United States wants to see a strong, prosperous, stable, and democratic Azerbaijan. This has been the goal of our diplomatic relations and will remain so.

In talking about the relations between the United States and Azerbaijan, or any set of bilateral relations, it is essential to remember bilateral concerns are often informed by or set within multilateral relations and institutions. The U.S./Azerbaijan relationship is working in an international order that developed out of the conflicts of the 20th century. This international order is one that has underwritten unparalleled advances in human liberty and prosperity.

It is this diplomatic endeavor, as President Obama told the UN General Assembly last month, that has brought about cooperation among the world's major powers, and buttressed a global economy that has lifted over one billion – one billion – people out of poverty. It is these international principles that constrain bigger countries from imposing their will on smaller ones and advance the well-being of people on every continent. And it is these principles, whether in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Accords, the agreements creating the international financial and trade institutions, or in other such agreements, that need to be respected and advanced.

They cannot be taken for granted by any country, no matter what its size, history, or geographic location. Even though we can all think of examples where states fall short of this goal, as students of international relations I think you will agree that it is in the interest of all countries to uphold international standards. Otherwise, as President Obama noted, we are in danger of returning to old ways of conflict and coercion.

I think this is an idea that Azerbaijanis hold as well and the world community observed Azerbaijan's potential and desire to play a positive and significant role in multilateral fora during its successful two years on the UN Security Council as well as in its contribution to this year's peacekeeping summit.

Since I arrived in Azerbaijan, I have heard high praise for ADA University from many different corners. It is a highly regarded institution, respected for the quality of its faculty and students. This gives me confidence in our continued strong partnership, based on shared values, communication, cooperation, and mutual respect, with Azerbaijan on the three fronts of security, energy and economic development, and democracy and human rights and in our continued efforts to uphold and strengthen the international order. I am excited at the idea of working with current and future diplomats alike to keep that relationship moving forward.

Thank you and now let's open the floor to questions and discussion.